

FOLLOWING THE PATH TO THE RIGHT SELECTION



MERIT PROMOTION

PEARS CERTIFICATE INSTRUCTIONS

We've e-mailed a link to your PEARS certificate. These downloaded instructions contain some general information pertaining to the Merit Promotion hiring process and guidance surrounding information sharing with applicants. Good luck with your selection process!

Please contact your customer service representative, at the Human Resources Operations office, with any questions about the information we've provided. (For the name of your customer service representative see the e-mail your certificate was attached to.)

The e-mailed certificate contains the names (in alphabetical order) of the "best qualified" applicants for your vacancy. You may select any of the individuals on the certificate. The certificate is valid for **45 calendar days from the date of issuance** (a specific due date is indicated on the certificate and in the e-mail instructions). You may request a **45-day** extension if you are unable to complete the selection process by the original expiration date. Requests for extension must be made prior to the certificate's expiration date. When requesting an extension, selecting officials may be asked to submit written documentation regarding the need for the extension. If necessary, a final 30-day extension may be approved for a total of **120 calendar days** from the date of issuance. Selections **cannot** be made from the certificate **after 120 days**.

When making your selection(s), please consider the following information:

- ♦ The Hatch Act (5 U.S.C. 3303) prohibits consideration of any political recommendations. The only information that may be submitted by a member of Congress is correspondence which attests to the character or residence of an applicant.
- ♦ You may interview all, none, or any of the candidates. Be prepared to support your interview and non-interview decisions.
- ♦ If your certificate has been amended for any reason, return the original certificate and replace it with the amended one.

- ♦ It's a good idea to make and retain personal notes regarding your selection(s) and non-selection(s) decisions.

Before you finalize your selection:

- ♦ Contact your customer service representative to obtain clearance and to determine an effective date for your selection. *All selections are tentative until cleared through Human Resources.*)

After your selection has been cleared:

- ♦ Indicate your selection(s), grade level, and proposed effective date(s) in an e-mail to your customer service representative.
- ♦ If applicable: notify selectee(s) receiving special salary rates that the selectee(s) will not retain the special salary rate if the selectee(s) is reassigned or accepts a voluntary downgrade to a non-special salary rate position.
- ♦ If you do not make a selection from the certificate, send an e-mail to your customer service representative indicating the reason why (e.g. the selection was made from another source).
- ♦ Return ALL hard copy applications you received (if applicable), NOT Letter (if applicable) and completed Declaration for Federal Employment (OF-306) forms. (These forms are available at this website, to access them use your back button or type this address in your web browser address line: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/employment_recruitment/case_exam_docs.html).
- ♦ The OF-306 is required for applicants who are reinstatement eligible, are from a different agency, or who are not currently employed by the Federal government. This form must be received and cleared by Human Resources before a final commitment can be made.

Other considerations:

- ♦ We recommend that you identify applicants during the interview process for possible buyout repayment requirements. Former federal government employees who took a Voluntary Separation Incentive Payment (VSIP) - also known as a "buyout" - under the Federal Work force Restructuring Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-226) must repay the full amount to the agency that paid the buyout, prior to the first day of rehire.
- ♦ Applicants who have held higher grades in the past may be entitled to a rate of pay higher than the step 10 of the advertised grade. Recent down sizing in government agencies has resulted in employee entitlements to retained grade and pay. Please contact your customer service specialist for more details.
- ♦ Noncompetitive applicants are basically qualified for the position and do not compete under the merit promotion process. As a result, performance evaluation statements are not required. You

may interview noncompetitive applicants and consider them in addition to the applicants. Applicants may be selected from either category.

Information Sharing With Applicants

You **may** provide the following information to applicants:

- ◆ Name of the individual selected
- ◆ Whether or not the applicant was considered
- ◆ Whether or not the applicant was among the basically or best qualified groups
- ◆ Ways in which the applicant might improve chances for future selection
- ◆ Reason(s) why the applicant was not selected

The following information **cannot** be shared and is considered confidential:

- ◆ Information about other applicants (e.g., employment history, race, age, performance appraisal, application information, or evaluation sheet)
- ◆ Rating plan information; this information is considered to be confidential examining material by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

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If you have any questions relating to the merit promotion process or the enclosed information, please contact your customer service representative at the Human Resources Operations office. (For the name of your customer service representative see the e-mail your certificate was attached to.

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